1: Childs M-S (1924-1940) 1949 Fip 13 Mbundu FP 13

This so-called democratic streak is also abundantly attested by folk-tales which give incidental and intimate pictures of petty details in the life of kings. There is one in which a king gives instructions for caring for his field while he is absent on a war party; another which tells of a fine levied on a man who while hiding up a tree accidentally urinated on a king; another, of a king who in a time of hunger himself climbed a tree for the *epŏlĭ* fruit and nearly starved when the prop by which he had climbed was taken away. Recent arrivals in Africa upon meeting some king just coming up from work in his fields may at first conclude, as did I, that this extreme of 'democracy' is due to the low estate to which royalty has fallen in these latter days, but these historical and legendary references show that this 'democracy', such as it is, is not a degeneration but an essential part of the picture.

With this I shall have to leave royalty. I trust that enough of the picture has been given, and enough also to show what inherent interest would lie in a study of such a Divine King who is at the same time a sort of 'democratic' leader. Should 'indirect rule' ever come to this part of Africa, a resurrection of the royal office would be the order of the day as has been the case in Tanganyika Territory and in the Belgian Congo. For this additional reason an early and a thorough treatment of the subject is to be desired.

Sub-Tribes

Each of the kings of the Ovimbundu was an overlord, for the tribe was made up of a number of sub-tribes called *atumbu* (plural), a word derived from the verb *oku tumbulula*, to transplant. Some of these princes, whether of the blood-royal or not, themselves established dynasties, while others were newly appointed and promoted from time to time. Some of the *atumbu* were ruled by court officials not of royal birth, while others belonged to separate dynasties some of which were natives of the respective regions, at least more anciently native than was the paramount royal family. The kingdom of Bailundu had about 200 *atumbu*, each of which had from 3 to 300 villages or more, and a number of the larger *atumbu* were themselves made up of several smaller

[643]

Lacerda in *Annaes Mar. e Col.*, 5 Ser., p. 488 f.; L. Magyar, *Reisen in Süd-Afrika* (tr. Hunfalvy, Pesth, 1859), p. 278.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

ones. This situation was reported by Magyar, when he wrote, 'Quibanda (should be Civanda) to the east has 500 villages. The Chief has great power. He sends tribute every year to the king of Bailundu but is himself fully independent.'[1] Magyar described about 15 *atumbu* or '*ovikandscho*',[2] as he called them, of Bailundu. He estimated the population of Bailundu at 450,000, and for all the kingdoms of the Ovimbundu 1,200,000,[3] figures which are probably not very different from present-day facts. The report and description of the 'Capitania de Benguella' in 1799 said that the king of Bailundu dominated 2,056 villages; the king of Viye, 886; and the king of Ngalangi, 900; and listed their 'feudos' respectively as 82, 54, and 78.[4] My list of the Ngalangi *atumbu* shows 112. In Bailundu about 20 *atumbu* were ruled by members of the royal family, including heirs apparent or expectant, and the queen (*Inakulu*), who also had her own establishment.[5] About 20 were ruled by other court officials.

Most of these *atumbu* are still recognized as such or as *olombala*.[6] Their decay has not been as great as that of the *ombala*[6] of their liege lord, for they still fulfil certain functions in native life. They have also been given new functions by the administrative authorities. The minor chiefs as well as village headmen are all required to assist in assessing and collecting the native tax, and also in recruiting labour for government works and for contracts. In some areas they receive in return the remission of their own taxes. In some areas they are required to wear uniforms. On the dancing floors of most of these minor *olombala* courts are still held, justice determined, and (to a limited extent) fines 'eaten'. Such judgements are not officially recognized or allowed by the European authorities. The African, however, often finds that European courts do not meet his needs or accord with his concepts of justice.

[1] Magyar, op. cit., p. 389.

[2] Umbundu *ovikanjo* (plural), 'branches', a term which through commercial or European influence is applied to the *atumbu*.

[3] For these figures and for descriptions of the several kingdoms, see Magyar, op. cit., chap. ix.

[4] *Annaes Mar. e Col.*, 4a Ser., pp. 155 ff.

[5] Magyar, op. cit., p. 390.

[6] *Olombala*, plural of *ombala*, a capital village or chief's residence.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

'robber-baron', established himself[21] and in 1904 there was a minor rising against the Portuguese[22] (not to be confused with the very extensive Bailundo war of 1902–3). In 1908 the government post was founded for Bimbe, and in 1928 the Catholic Mission was established at the point where the Bailundo Mission had the furthest flung catechetical school in that direction. In 1927 the first trader had settled at Chicunda.[23] The areas under the mission and the post do not coincide, but it may be said that Bimbe is the territory bounded on the west by the River Cuvo or Keve and on the east by the main road from Bailundo to Gabela. The southern boundary of the post ran roughly on a line between the post and the Ponte Salazar (which bridges the Cuvo (or Keve) and takes the road into Cassongue), and the northern boundary is formed by a parallel line drawn from the road some way to the south of Cela to the river. In 1956 the post of Bimbe was divided; much of the western part including the Mission was placed under a new post Luvemba.

Chicunda is twenty kilometres beyond the mission, and seven kilometres beyond Chicunda a turning from the main track brings one to the village of Epalanga. Keeping on the track, a further bifurcation, say two and a half kilometres on, gives a track to the left which leads to a small leper colony, and a track leading straight on and sharply upwards to the village of the chief of Gumba.

This village lies at the summit of a sharp ridge which rises up from the ordinary level and then drops abruptly to a neighbourhood inaccessible to motor transport, which forms the greater part of the Gumba chiefdom. The boundary on the other side is a river across which lies Cela.

Such is the lay-out of the area studied. It is up in the north-western corner of the Umbundu country, indeed down by the Mission, people said that the people of Gumba were not Ovimbundu really but 'Olongoya', as the peoples to the north are termed. Many of the people in Gumba had come from

[21] Childs, p. 22.

[22] Information obtained locally. I did not see official records.

[23] Information obtained locally.